Sanctification in Community: The History, Doctrine, and Practice of Sanctification

Mark A. Snoeberger
Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary

PART 2: ANOTHER WAY—SECOND STEP MODELS OF SANCTIFICATION (WESLEYAN, REVIVALIST, ALTAR, KESWICK, and CHAFERIAN MODELS)

Introduction/Review:

Justification = Being Legally Regarded by God as Righteous

Sanctification = Becoming Practically or Experimentally Holy

The Major Question: How do we connect these two doctrines, emphasizing the importance of both without diminishing the importance of either?

The First Flawed Model: Roman Catholicism:

Explanaiton: Roman Catholicism answers the question by merging justification and sanctification such that personal holiness is necessary to earn justification.

A Second Flawed Model: Second-Step Models of Sanctification

The Statement of the Errors of Second-Step Models of Sanctification:

Error #1: Sanctification is sharply disconnected from justification and essentially begins when the believer receives it in a *second step*.

Error #2: Sanctification, like justification, is all of faith and all of Christ. Just like justification is "not of works lest any man should boast," so also sanctification is "not of works lest any man should boast."

The Historical Development of the Second-Step Model of Sanctification:

(1) Wesleyanism:

(a) Justification and sanctification begin simultaneously with justification serving as an act of "pardoning in order to participation."

(b) Believers advance in holiness with extreme difficulty until they receive "sanctifying grace" and partake of "perfect love."

(c) At some point in their walk, usually just before death, believers receive this "sanctifying grace," at which time they "feel that it is not they that speak, but the Spirit of their Father who speaketh in them, and whatsoever is done by their hands, the Father who is in them, he doeth the works."

(2) Nineteenth-Century American Revivalism

(a) Charles Finney's Colossal Failure in Evangelism

(b) Asa Mahan's Attempt to Salvage a Bad Situation: The Suppression of Regeneration and Emphasis on 'Positional' Sanctification.

(c) The Birth of a New Model: Revivalism

(d) New Features in the Finney/Mahan Model:

- While Wesley anticipated receiving sanctifying grace near the *end* of the Christian's experience, Mahan and Finney connected sanctifying grace with the *beginning* of the Christian experience.

- While Wesley viewed entire sanctification as more-or-less permanent, Finney expected it to come and go.
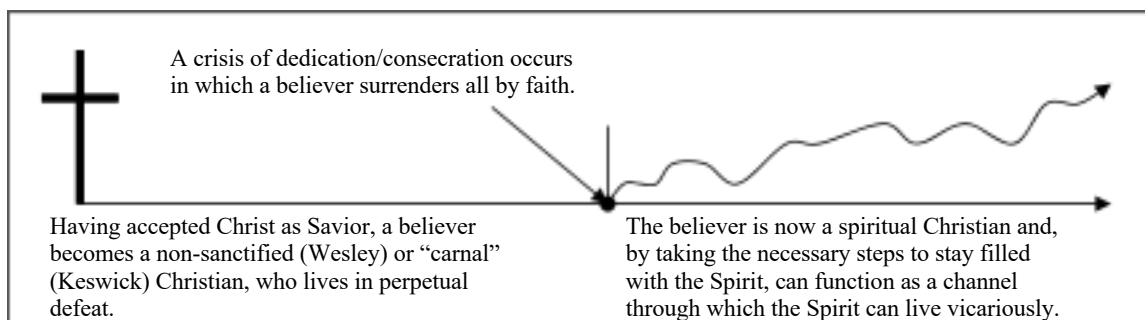
(3) The "Shorter Way" of Phoebe Palmer

(a) Palmer's Discovery of "Altar Theology" (Matt 23:19 with Rom 6:11–14 and 12:1).

(b) Altar Theology Becomes an Evangelical Mainstay.

(4) Keswick Theology: An Amalgamation of Palmer and Mahan.

- Following Mahan and Finney, the Keswick model adopted Mahan's terminology of positional sanctification.

- Following Palmer and Wesley, the Keswick model taught that the baptism of the Spirit, (a.k.a. dedication/consecration) occurred only once by means of a faith-consecration event, and could never be lost.

- Following Finney and Mahan, however, the Keswick model taught that something *could* be regularly lost and regained, namely the "filling of the Spirit."

- Abandoning Wesley, the Keswick model denied the possibility of a permanent state of perfection and replaced it with the quest for a "victorious Christian life."

Below is a diagrammatic detail of the two-step model adapted from Charles Ryrie (a proponent of the Chaferian model, a close variation of the Keswick model) in his *Balancing the Christian Life* (p. 187):

A crisis of dedication/consecration occurs in which a believer surrenders all by faith.

Having accepted Christ as Savior, a believer becomes a non-sanctified (Wesley) or "carnal" (Keswick) Christian, who lives in perpetual defeat.

The believer is now a spiritual Christian and, by taking the necessary steps to stay filled with the Spirit, can function as a channel through which the Spirit can live vicariously.

Analysis of Second-Step Models of Sanctification:

Positively,

(1) Second-step models of sanctification take seriously the doctrine of total depravity, and are emphatic that the believer's holiness does not contribute in any sense to his or her status before God.

(2) Second-step models of sanctification are deeply concerned with personal holiness.

Negatively, however,

(1) Second-step models of sanctification offer no *necessary* connection between justification and sanctification, and unwittingly undercut the very holiness they are trying to promote.

The **practical** manifestation of this problem is to elevate the need for justification but shrug off the need for sanctification.

Contrarily, Scripture places great importance on personal holiness, insisting that "without holiness, no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14), that "faith without works is dead" (Jas 2:17, 20, 26), and, most stunning of all, that "a man is justified by works and not by faith alone" (Jas 2:24).

(2) Second-step models of sanctification minimize the enormous power of regeneration and gut initial sanctification of the considerable capacity for holiness that it offers.

Practically, this means that sanctification reduces to a mystical consecration event where the believer meditates on his justification until he "lets go and lets God," effectively transforming him into a channel for Jesus to be holy in the stead of the believer.

Contrarily, Scripture teaches that in sanctification, the indwelling Spirit and the mind of Christ are part and parcel with the believer's new self, empowering him to obey and please God and resulting in inexorable transformation into Christlikeness:

- Philippians 2:12–13
- Hebrews 12:1–2
- Philippians 3:12–14
- Colossians 3:5–11
- Ephesians 4:17–25
- Romans 12:2
- 2 Corinthians 3:18

(3) Finally, as we will explore in the upcoming weeks, second-step models of sanctification also make curious and unsustainable explanations of the ideas of *dead/death* (Rom 6:1–14), *reckoning* (Rom 6:11), *filling* (Eph 5:18), *carnality* (1 Cor 3:1–4), etc.

Conclusion: Last week we looked at a model of sanctification that errs by merging justification nd sanctification together, such that the believer must be sanctified in order to earn his justification (Roman Catholicism). This week, we looked at the opposite problem—a model that so divorces sanctification from justification that it guts regeneration of all of its force and effectively renders sanctification optional. Next week, we will look at a model that avoids both extremes and better accounts for all the biblical material.